



GOLD SHIELD PROGRAM TIP SHEET

This “Tip Sheet” has been revised in direct response to comments the Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) received from the Smog Check industry at our Gold Shield Program workshops in June 2008. They are intended to assist you in understanding and meeting the Gold Shield standards.

About the Gold Shield Standards

There are eight standards that Smog Check stations must meet to participate in the Gold Shield Program. These standards are established in Title 16, California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 3392.3. Three of the standards are based on test and repair data transmitted to BAR’s Vehicle Information Database (VID) through the emissions inspection systems used by Smog Check stations. The three VID-based standards, and tips on how to meet each, are explained in greater detail below. The remaining five standards are enforcement-related checks of the station and its technicians.

Quarterly Performance Reviews

CCR Section 3392.5(a) (6) requires a quarterly review of three of the Gold Shield standards: (1) Comparative Failure Rate; (2) Successful Emission Repairs; and (3) Repair Performance. Since Gold Shield stations are required by law to perform repairs on vehicles qualifying under BAR’s Consumer Assistance Program, two of these standards are repair related.

Stations failing to meet any of these three standards for two consecutive calendar quarters may lose their certification and be removed from the Gold Shield Program. Calendar quarters are as follows: **Quarter #1** (January – March); **Quarter #2** (April – June); **Quarter #3** (July – September); and **Quarter #4** (October – December).

1. Comparative Failure Rate

This standard compares each quarter the Smog Check inspection failure rate of a station to the failure rate of Test-Only stations located in the same program area (i.e., Enhanced or Basic). Because it is based on the results of millions of Smog Check inspections occurring at numerous Test-Only stations, for vehicles with unique emissions issues, the standard changes quarterly.

The standard only considers “initial” tests performed by stations; no retests are included in the comparison. It also does not include vehicles that require inspection at a Test-Only station; only vehicles that consumers voluntarily take to Test-Only stations for inspection are included. The Test-Only failure rate is calculated by model year and then applied to the same model years tested at each Test and Repair station. Consequently, a Test and Repair with customers

who own newer vehicles likely to pass Smog Check will not be penalized if older vehicles more likely to fail Smog Check are being inspected at Test-Only stations.

Top reasons stations do not meet the *Comparative Failure Rate* standard:

- Skipping the functional and visual inspections of a Smog Check.
- Pre-screening vehicles using the “manual mode” or “training mode.”
- Turning away vehicles that are not running well or have tampered emissions control equipment.
- Over-conditioning the engine, or using other tactics, to get the vehicle to pass Smog Check.
- Aborting tests when it appears the vehicle is about to fail Smog Check.

Tips to help your station meet the *Comparative Failure Rate* standard:

- Test vehicles in the condition your station receives them.
- Perform complete and thorough inspections using either the official Smog Check mode or pre-inspection mode; both are counted in your station’s initial test failure rate.
- Do not pre-screen or reject potentially failing vehicles.
- Do not abort tests when the vehicle does not “fast pass.”
- Avoid partial pre-tests unless the consumer specifically asks for one.

2. Successful Emission Repairs

This standard measures whether a station is actively involved in emissions repair work. The standard requires a station to perform a minimum of 10 repairs resulting from a tailpipe emission failure. Repair information also must be entered into the Emissions Inspection System (EIS) within 24 hours of the date of repair and the vehicle must be certified within 10 days of that repair date.

Top reasons stations do not meet the *Successful Emission Repairs* standard:

- Failing to enter, or incorrectly entering, repair data into the EIS.
- Repairing vehicles that have not failed an official Smog Check or pre-inspection mode test.
- Low repair volume.

Tips to help your station meet the *Successful Emission Repairs* standard:

- Verify the vehicle being repaired by your station has failed an official Smog Check or pre-inspection mode test within the past 60 days. If you are unsure because the vehicle was tested at another station, conduct a “baseline” test using either of these test modes. Vehicles failing only a “manual mode” or “training mode” test do not qualify for purposes of determining a successful emission repair.
- Perform repairs to correct tailpipe emission failures; any other type of Smog Check failure(s) and subsequent repairs do not qualify.
- Enter immediately all repair data into the EIS once repairs are completed.
- If you are unable to enter repair data into your station’s EIS because the vehicle requires certification at a Test-Only or Gold Shield station, use the “Repair Only” function of the EIS.

- Encourage customers to get their vehicles certified within 10 days after having repairs performed.

3. Repair Performance

This standard measures the quality of a station's repairs in comparison to other Test and Repair stations located in the same program area (i.e., Enhanced or Basic). The evaluation reviews the certification inspection of a vehicle to determine whether its post-repair emissions levels are at or below the average passing emissions levels for similar types of vehicles. Average passing emissions levels are calculated each quarter to compensate for vehicle age and mileage.

The standard requires that a station rank in the top 75% of Test and Repair stations for repair effectiveness. For example, a station receiving a score of 90% ranks in the top 10% of Test and Repair stations and easily passes the standard, whereas a station with a score of 20% ranks in the bottom 80% and does not meet the standard for the quarter. However, only stations that meet the "Successful Emission Repairs" standard described above will receive a "Repair Performance" score.

Top reasons stations do not meet the *Repair Performance* standard:

- Not performing a "baseline" test prior to repairing vehicles, and instead relying on old and possibly inaccurate Smog Checks performed at other stations.
- Not using a systematic diagnostic approach to determine the root cause of the emission failure.
- Minimal diagnosis and/or minor adjustments made (i.e., incomplete repairs) to get the vehicle to pass just under the cutpoints.

Tips to help your station meet the *Repair Performance* standard:

- Conduct a thorough diagnosis on every vehicle that fails Smog Check.
- Determine the root cause of the failure and perform repairs that are appropriate to that diagnosis.
- Perform complete repairs on tailpipe emission failures.
- Use the average passing emission readings on the Vehicle Inspection Report (VIR) as a guide. In many cases, the VIR readings are more stringent than today's average passing emissions levels which account for vehicle age and mileage.

Gold Shield Contacts

To review a complete list of the Gold Shield standards and regulations, visit BAR's Web site at: www.smogcheck.ca.gov. Click on the Gold Shield sign. You may also obtain copies of the Gold Shield regulations by calling or visiting your local BAR field office.

Should you have any additional questions, please contact BAR's Gold Shield Coordinator at (916) 255-1326.